DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 081 175 EM 011 261

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TITLE	A First Hard Look at the Surgeon General's Report on Television and Violence.
INSTITUTION	Academy for Educational Development, Inc., Washington, D.C.; Aspen Inst. for Humanistic Studies, Palo Alto, Calif. Program on Communications and Society.
SPONS AGENCY	Ford Foundation, New York, N.Y.; John and Mary R. Markle Foundation, New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE	Mar 72
NOTE	12p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Aspen Program on Communications and Society, Suite 232, 770 Welch Road, Palo Alto, California 94304 ($50)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Aggression; Anti Social Behavior; Children; Conference Reports; *Public Policy; *Television; *Television Research; Television Surveys; *Television Viewing; *Violence
IDENTIFIERS	Aspen Program on Communcations and Society; Surgeon General of the United States; *Surgeon Generals Report on Television Violence

ABSTRACT

In March of 1972 the Aspen Program on Communications and Society convened a meeting which brought together the Surgeon General, staff members connected with the Surgeon General's Report on Television and Violence, and social scientists. The purpose of the meeting was to evaluate the Report, which had just been issued. This conference report represents the efforts of two observers to interpret the reactions of the group to the Surgeon General's Report. It summarizes the background of concern over violence on television, discusses the genesis and composition of the Advisory Committee which undertook the project, describes the research conducted and the Report issued, treats its significance, and considers some approaches to public policy. (PB)

ED 081175

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COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIETY

March 1972

A First Hard Look at the Surgeon General's Report on Television and Violence

by

Douglass Cater and Stephen Strickland

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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In the early spring of 1969, Senator John Pastore sent a letter to the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare declaring that he was "exceedingly troubled by the lack of any definitive information which would help resolve the question of whether there is a causal connection between televised crime and violence and anti-social behavior by individuals, especially children." The Senator, who is a major Congressional figure in matters of communications policy, requested that the Surgeon General appoint a committee of distinguished men and women "from whatever professions and disciplines deemed appropriate" to conduct a study which "will establish scientifically insofar as possible what harmful effects, if any, (television) programs have on children."

Pastore felt that the Surgeon General should be given this assignment "because of the outstanding contribution made by his Committee through its report on Smoking and Health." He expressed hope of a report within a year's time.

The Senator's letter triggered an inquiry lasting nearly three years, budgeted at more than one and one-half million dollars. When the Surgeon General finally issued his Scientific Advisory Committee's Report, *Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence* in January 1972, it was undergirded by twenty-three independent research projects which produced more than forty technical papers (to be published separately in five volumes).

Long before the Report was issued, it was apparent that it would receive critical review from at least three constituencies. Among the social scientist community, scepticism was stirred when Surgeon General William Stewart, claiming the precedent of the Smoking Committee, appointed several employees and consultants of the networks to his television committee and allowed the industry to veto seven distinguished social scientists who had been doing research in this area. Second, the broadcast industry was known to be highly suspicious that television was being made the scapegoat for society's ills. And, finally, the politicians were likely to be contemptuous of an inconclusive report for which so much time and money had been expended. (". . . I would hope the Surgeon General in due time will come before this Committee, not with a lot of ifs and buts, but will tell us in simple language whether or not broadcasters ought to be put on notice and be very, very careful in this area, because it might have an effect on certain people," Pastore declared last September.)

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All these suspicions flared anew when a leaked summary of the Report in early January led to the erroneous headline in the *New York Times*, "TV Violence Held Unharmful to Youth". The Report's decidedly cautious and often abstruse language provoked the charge of "whitewash" from one member of Congress and complaints from several social scientists who felt their research findings had been neglected or diluted by the Surgeon General's Committee. The possibility arose that this major enterprise might be undermined by a crisis of credibility.

As a result of the controversy and in anticipation of Senate hearings scheduled in late March, the newly established Aspen Program on Communications and Society convened a small gathering at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto to review the Surgeon General's Report. In attendance for the weekend meeting were the Surgeon General, along with the Vice-Chairman and two members of the Advisory Committee. Social scientists present included two who had been on the television networks' veto list. Also in attendance were the staff director of Senator Pastore's Committee and three foundation heads concerned with social science research. (Participants are listed at the end of this paper.) A flu virus prevented the scheduled participation of Frank Stanton, a broadcast executive who was himself a social scientist earlier in his career.

No attempt was made to reach consensus at the Palo Alto meeting. Rather it was intended to provide a searching review of the Surgeon General's Report and to consider consequences for the future. While disagreements were voiced, the meeting revealed substantial agreement on five conclusions:

1. Credibility of the Surgeon General's Committee was severely impaired by permitting unilateral industry veto over its membership. Future scientific investigations sponsored by the government should heed this lesson.

2. The Committee's Report reflects both scientific caution and the added restraint imposed by the effort to secure unanimity among its twelve members. Its language suffers from group draftsmanship as well as last minute haste in preparing the final summations. Nevertheless, the Report does gain added strength from the Committee's unanimity. Surgeon General Jesse Steinfeld, who succeeded to the office after the Committee was set up, has reason to maintain that this was not a "whitewash" and that "for the first time causality between violence viewing on television and subsequent aggression has been identified."

3. The Report, together with the supporting research, provides abundant reason for renewed public concern about the environment of television in which our children grow up. The child spends more time before the TV set than in any other pursuit except sleeping. Television outdistances school as the occupation of his waking hours. It would be disastrous for society to disregard an influence so pervasive.

4. Public policy needs to be better informed about the effects of televised violence. We also need to ask larger questions about the potential of the medium. Social science should be supported to carry on further research but the broadcast industry itself must devote greater resources to research and development. The burden should not lie with government or citizen groups to demonstrate television's effects for good or evil. The industry has a dominant responsibility.

5. Actions need not await final research. While governmental control of programming would be bad public policy, there is reason for pressure from Congress and governmental agencies to reinforce public concern. Even more important, there should be a cooperative effort to create an institution outside government capable of continuing attention to television's effects. As a beginning, it might develop techniques for monitoring the quantity and nature of televised violence in order to provide a trustworthy pollution index for the public airwaves.

The following, while not purporting to be a report of the Palo Alto conference, represents the best efforts of these two reporters to interpret this first hard look at the Surgeon General's Report.

Background

Twenty years ago the National Association of Educational Broadcasters reported that drama involving crime and horror made up 10 percent of programming time. Concern about the effects of such program content on human behavior led to hearings by the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency in 1954. The committee concluded that television violence was especially likely to be harmful to young viewers.

Television broadcast industry spokesmen acknowledged the large amount of televised violence and indicated that something would be done about it. But subsequent surveys revealed that television violence increased, rather than decreased between the early 1950's and the early 1960's. Parents' groups and others stepped up their efforts to organize public opinion and secure remedial action against the violent "messages" transmitted by an ever-growing presence.

In 1964, another round of Juvenile Delinquency hearings produced the conclusion that television violence was not only **not** being reduced, but was being extended by the syndication of some of the more violent shows to be subsequently reshown on independent networks and stations. The 1964 Senate Committee report warned that such television content produced anti-social behavior among juveniles and repeated the charge of "an informed critic" that television was becoming "a school for violence."

For fifteen years, public expression of concern about the harmful effects of televised violence and crime on the nation's children resulted in intermittent deliberations over the issue, in and out of Congress, but virtually no action by the industry or the government. For its part, the television industry seemed unimpressed by the "scientific evidence" purporting to prove adverse effects. Demands of a few angry parents were an insufficient indicator of consumer attitudes to prompt major changes. On the contrary, the activity of the marketplace suggested that television – and its program content – was satisfying both viewers and sponsors. Millions more Americans were watching, including children who watched adult programs with at least the tacit approval of parents.

The assassinations and riots of the middle sixties rekindled the concern to search out causes for the violence in our nation. President Johnson, in creating the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, charged it "to undertake a penetrating search. . . . into our national life, our past as well as our present, our traditions as well as our institutions, our culture, our customs and our laws" so as

to be able to explain, and propose remedies for, any persistent forces at work in American society which were productive of violence. The Commission, chaired by Dr. Milton Eisenhower, set up a Task Force on the Media.

The Eisenhower Commission, originally given a year from June 1968 to complete its work by President Johnson, had its life extended by six months, to December 1969, by President Nixon. But troubling to those in Congress who had been awaiting a clear and thorough assessment of television violence were reports that the findings of its Task Force on the Media would not be made an integral part of the Commission's final report.

Ultimately, the Eisenhower Commission, while warning of the danger of making television a "scapegoat", did issue a strong statement: "We believe it is reasonable to conclude that a constant diet of violent behavior on television has an adverse effect on human character and attitudes. Violence on television encourages violent forms of behavior, and fosters moral and social values about violence in daily life which are unacceptable in a civilized society. . . . It is a matter for grave concern that at a time when the values and the influence of traditional institutions such as family, church, and school are in question, television is emphasizing violent, antisocial styles of life."

Meanwhile, early in 1969, the Senate Subcommittee on Communications, chaired by Senator John Pastore, decided that what was needed – to help resolve the issue of the impact of television on "the mind, attitudes, and actions of the child viewer" – was the focused attention of a scientific committee. Pastore noted that "many authorities in the fields of psychiatry and other disciplines" had taken positions on the issue while others contended that "the limited experiments that have been conducted produced no scientific proof for or against the proposition" of harmful results.

President Nixon endorsed Pastore's proposal and HEW Secretary Finch complied by directing the Surgeon General to constitute a committee of "experts" in behavioral sciences, mental health disciplines and communications to come up with the soundest answer to the question that scientific evidence would allow.

The Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee

The Surgeon General at that time, Dr. William Stewart, cautioned the Senate that the establishment of clear indices on which to make policy decisions might be more difficult for behavioral scientists looking at television than for medical scientists looking at tobacco. The problem of scientific evidence, however, was not the first problem the new advisory committee faced. When the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on Smoking and Health was appointed earlier in the sixties, the tobacco industry had been given opportunity to comment on those whose names were proposed for membership. The rationale was that if the Committee subsequently issued a negative report on cigarette smoking (as in fact it did), there could be no charge that the deck was stacked. Following that procedure, Surgeon General Stewart submitted a list of forty nominees to the three major television networks and the National Association of Broadcasters for their review and comments. Frank Stanton, President of CBS, thought the nominees "distinguished" and declined to make any suggestions about who the Surgeon General's appointments to his own advisory committee ought to be. NBC, ABC and the National Association of Broadcasters did comment, raising objections to seven persons on the

list. Surgeon General Stewart deferred to this industry veto. In addition, two of the Committee members he appointed were network employees, one a former employee and two others were serving as industry consultants.

This procedure resulted in charges of a reverse bias from that which the Surgeon General sought to avoid. No opportunity had been given professional associations to comment on the experts who were appointed to the Committee. When the members of the Advisory Committee learned about the industry's veto six months after their appointment, their consternation came close to producing resignations. It did produce continuing suspicion and bitterness on the part of some members of the group and others in the social science community. It lead to the Committee's flat declaration in its Report: "We do not agree that any group should have been allowed to cite individuals as unacceptable."

Organizational problems did not end with the matter of selection of Committee members. There were equally difficult problems in staffing up, relating both to the haste in getting the study underway and the fact that it was to be a short-term assignment for anyone who undertook it. Outstanding social scientists found it impossible to extricate themselves from on-going commitments on short notice. Unlike, for example, the legal profession, social science is not well organized to respond quickly to urgently expressed demands from the government.

The Research

None of the social scientists appointed to the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior believed that in the one year suggested by Pastore they could produce and evaluate a sufficient amount of hard data to answer definitively the question posed by the Senator: "whether there is a causal connection between televised crime and violence and anti-social behavior by individuals, especially children." A member of Pastore's staff later remarked: "We realized the time squeeze but we also knew that if we let them set the time limit, it would be too long in the first place and they would want an extension beyond that." When the Committee indicated it would take longer than a year to do the assignment, Pastore raised no objection. In fact, almost three years elapsed before the Report appeared.

Similarly, few persons well acquainted with the social sciences believe that, whatever time is allowed, a diverse group of behavioral scientists is likely to reach full agreement on interpreting research data. The matter of methodology is persistently a bone of contention. Professor Ithiel de Sola Pool points out that the methodological approach to the investigation of economic problems is so well established that economists are judged by their peers more on the basis of how perfectly they use the accepted tools than on the way they interpret the results. But behavioral scientists in the softer disciplines begin with disagreement on methodology, thus compounding the probability of disagreement about results. It was therefore no surprise that repeated disagreements occurred within the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on whether the research being supported could produce worthwhile data.

The Committee early faced the issue of laboratory research versus field surveys versus clinical studies. The members recognized the limitations of each approach. Laboratory experiments, measuring the immediate effects on children of selected television viewing

in a necessarily artificial situation, can provide insight into cause–effect relations that exist under specified conditions, but they cannot provide conclusive evidence about what happens in the real world. On the other hand, surveys, while establishing relations between television viewing and aggressive actions, cannot prove causations. Clinical study, while examining a case in great depth, cannot be certain how representative it may be.

The Eisenhower Commission on Violence, because of time limits, did not commission major new research in this area, choosing to rely on the opinions of "the best minds in the communications media, particularly in television; in the academic community, particularly communications specialists; and in government agencies, notably the Federal Communications Commission." But it was no secret in Washington that the Commission had trouble interpreting the "best minds". In November 1969, the Commission issued – but significantly, did not endorse – a staff report on "Mass Media and Violence" which concluded that "there is sufficient evidence that mass media presentations especially portrayals of violence, have negative effects upon audiences," and recommended that "the burden of research and proof" be placed on the television industry to carry out research on "the psychological and sociological effects of mass media portrayals of violence." The staff report stated that the television industry had for the previous fifteen years failed to reduce the violence content of programs, despite repeated promises to do so, and had failed to carry out any appreciable amount of research on the issue.

Hoping to take the matter beyond the unendorsed recommendations of a commission staff into the realm of fresh, focused scientific evidence, the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee commissioned a great variety of new research. Both laboratory experiments and field surveys were included. Funding from the National Institute of Mental Health was not a problem and the Committee went well beyond the $1 million budget originally allocated. But finding good projects proved difficult. Members conceded that some of the research proved to be of poor quality or not relevant to the task of the Committee. Other areas that would appear ripe for research were neglected in the project proposals.

Neither the Advisory Committee nor its staff tried to prepare an overall research design. (Some doubt a design could have been imposed on the highly independent social science community.) Instead, it was decided not to "put all our eggs in one basket" but to seek "a series of individual studies that would provide a set of interrelated findings." A large part of the research effort was to trace relationships between televised violence and "aggressive" behavior in young people – a narrowing of Pastore's query about "antisocial" behavior. Only one research project probed into violence "content analysis" and this was confined to a single week's prime time programming in October 1969, updating earlier one-week analyses of 1967 and 1968 prepared for the Violence Commission. As a result, there is still lacking an index in depth of the trends and types of violence which come over the nation's airwaves.

The research projects made no effort to examine major episodes of antisocial behavior and trace the possibility of televised instigation. Nor did they go very far in examining the "context" in which violence is presented – real or imaginary, rewarded or punished. There is a great deal more to be explored in this forbidding territory.

But certain elemental facts do emerge clearly from the studies. Incidents of prime time and Saturday a.m. violence continue at the rate of eight an hour (over twice the British rate which itself is padded by American imports). Fatalities have declined somewhat but cartoon and comedy violence, especially in the Saturday morning "children's ghetto", has increased. Violence is typically sanitized – portrayed in a painless way that does not convey the real suffering of the victim and his family. One study indicates a tendency for violence to peak in four year cycles – apparently pushed by competition for Nielson ratings. A series of interviews with program producers provides fascinating insight into their motives. In their incessant quest for program material, there is a compulsion to supply enough "action" to keep the TV sets turned on. Violence, it would seem, serves as a punctuation point and way of bridging the pause for commercials.

The research findings fail to probe the saturation point of television among youth. What is the psychopathology of those one quarter of youngsters interviewed who reach the outer limits of five or more viewing hours per day? Here cause and effect may become intertwined but surely it provides a fertile field for study.

Despite the time frame and other limitations, the question arises whether a more selective and strongly coordinated research effort could not have covered more ground and tied up the loose ends that the committee warned, in its final report, were still dangling. But the five volumes of research findings still constitute an imposing body of evidence.

The Report

The Advisory Committee worked with growing zeal to reach unanimous agreement in evaluating and interpreting the research. It achieved this goal despite strong tendencies to split in several directions. This effort to reach consensus put severe limitations on the content and clarity of the Report.

There were other restraints at work. First, the Committee was constantly aware, and constantly reminded, that its role was to assess the scientific data available, and not to make policy recommendations. Secretary Finch had made that quite explicit in agreeing to the formation of the Committee. Policy implications might be found in its data assessments but the Committee sought to follow the clear contours of its assigned role.

Second, judgment was not to replace scientific assessment. The usual caution of scientists in interpreting their results was reinforced as those results were put through another "scientific" screening. The committee of social scientists evaluated and reported the research findings of other social scientists at least as conservatively as the original researchers reported the meaning and applicability of their own conclusions.

Still another factor appeared to some observers to be at work in the Committee's approach towards the writing of its report. Although members of the Committee deny that there was a "television industry" faction which consistently pressed its view in the deliberations, members with teaching responsibilities had less time to give to the effort than did those whose livelihoods came from industry research in this field, and less energy to devote to suggesting contextual "qualifications" for each research finding and to honing careful phrases. The function of available time and energy helped shape

the language and tone of the Report.

The meaning of all this can be illustrated with one example: In an experimental study, cited approvingly by the Committee, a team of investigators looked closely at the daily behavior of 97 nursery school children over a period of nine weeks to measure the impact of different kinds of television program content. The children, divided into three groups, regularly viewed one of three series of short television or film episodes. One series emphasized "the Agressive Condition." A second series comprised "Neutral" programming. The third series featured "Prosocial" conditions with themes of sharing, cooperative behavior and self-discipline. The researchers flatly concluded: "Children who were initially high in aggression tendencies showed greater interpersonal aggression when they were exposed to the Aggressive condition than when they were exposed to the Neutral or Prosocial conditions."

The Advisory Committee, acknowledging the project to be significant, reported more cautiously: "Among children who were initially high in aggressive behavior, the differences in the changes that occurred is plausibly interpreted as indicating greater stimulation of aggressive behavior among those who viewed the violent diet than among those who viewed the neutral diet." The Committee then incorporated the apparent significance of the finding into one of the conclusions of the chapter by stating: "Televised violence may lead to increased aggressive behavior in certain subgroups of children, who might consitute a small portion or a substantial portion of the total population of young television viewers." In the overall summary of the Report, this conclusion was further refined: "We have noted in the studies at hand a modest association between viewing of violence and aggression among at least some children, and we have noted some data which are consonant with the interpretation that violence viewing produces the aggression. This evidence is not conclusive, however, and some of the data are also consonant with other interpretations."

Scientific caution and the quest for consensus are understandable restraints. Less understandable was the evidence of a final haste in putting the Report into print that resulted in a poorly written document with none of the encapsulating sentences or paragraphs that would provide clarity for the layman. The reader searches in vain for the kind of thoughtful summation which the prolonged deliberation should have produced.

But restraint accomplished the unanimity which had been the goal of the Committee. All twelve members signed the transmittal letter to the Surgeon General on January 19, 1972. All twelve endorsed the capstone conculsion, masterful in its caution: "Thus, the two sets of findings (experimental and survey) converge in three respects: a preliminary and tentative indication of a causal relation between viewing violence on television and aggressive behavior; an indication that any such causal relation operates only on some children (who are predisposed to be aggressive); and an indication that it operates only in some environmental contexts. Such tentative and limited conclusions are not very satisfying. They represent substantially more knowledge than we had two years ago, but they leave many questions unanswered."

The Meaning

After nearly three years and the expenditure of over a million dollars, the Surgeon General released a Report that could have profound consequences for the public and for one of the country's major industries. But a week before the Committee members finally signed the transmittal letter, the *New York Times* scooped the rest of the press with a page one story. The Report's elaborate cautions were translated with stark oversimplification by the lead paragraph: "The office of the United States Surgeon General has found that violence in television programming does not have an adverse effect on the majority of the nation's youth but may influence small groups of youngsters predisposed by many factors to aggressive behavior." The article's headline was dead wrong: "TV Violence Held Unharmful to Youth."

The *Times* interpretation, though quickly clarified by the Surgeon General, was reprinted and widely distributed by the Television Information Service of the NAB. Meanwhile, Congressman Murphy of New York denounced the Report as a "whitewash" and "heavily loaded in the industry's favor." Several researchers issued public complaints. It looked as if the whole enterprise would be pulled apart in a war of press communiques. But Surgeon General Steinfeld, having reviewed all of the five volumes of research, patiently maintained that the Report was not a whitewash. "For the first time, causality between violence viewing on television and subsequent aggression has been identified." Senator Pastore let it be known that he considered the Report a "major breakthrough" and scheduled hearings in late March 1972 to invite testimony about future policy implications. The Surgeon General and his Advisory Committee members, network heads, critics and other interested parties would be asked "what steps each can and should take in the light of the Report's findings and conclusions?"

Several issues deserve exploration by the Senate Committee. The issue of television's effects on children is now twenty years old. Yet the obvious need for concentrated, long-range attention to the issue has been met in a limited, spasmodic way. Relatively few behavioral scientists have recognized the importance of the issue and have tried to gain a better understanding. The television industry has for the most part treated the subject cavalierly. Violence on television – even on programs aimed at children – continues apace. The industry has taken little direct action and has not invested significant funds in research into effects for good or harm.

In other areas identified as requiring scientific evidence – from cancer control to space exploration – the government has invested large sums in the training of persons who can help shape the hard evidence on which to base intelligent public policy decisions. The federal investment in training and research programs in mass communications studies has been extremely small.

Television's impact on society demands a significant and long-term federal investment. The social sciences must participate in finding answers to difficult problems, and share in the public policy decisions to be made in this field. The need is for sustained government support for a field of study that behavioral scientists themselves must define, and for the development of mechanisms capable of focusing on long-range and short-range needs.

Certain specific research needs must be addressed. There is much work to be done in determining the nature of the "third variables" at work which permits some children to view large amounts of television violence with no apparent harmful effects and inclines other children towards aggressive tendencies. Is television itself an important factor in "predisposing" certain children toward aggression? Professor Albert Bandura, of Stanford, who has done pioneering work on television and children, questions the assumption that the predisposition to aggression is simply an inherent "child quality." The size of the "predisposed to aggression" group of children has not been explored. Little is known about the effect of television on the very young whose "predispositions" are still being shaped.

Even less is known about the ways violence can be portrayed for positive effect and what, in Wilbur Schramm's words, could be "TV's moral equivalent of violence." There is scanty but concrete evidence that entertainment television can be constructive. The Surgeon General's Advisory Committee pointed to "the most striking finding" that young viewers of *Misterogers Neighborhood* from families of low socioeconomic status tended to become more cooperative, helpful and sharing in their daily relations with others. High socioeconomic children showed no such response. Why the difference and what it means for future programming remains to be explored.

What is the real potential of television? It not only offers but imposes on children vicarious experience in no way comparable to that of earlier generations. As Dr. Ralph Tyler, of the Social Science Research Council, commented: "In recent years we have become alert to the importance of studying our environment in terms of its functions and the balance among them. Television is an environment. How are its services being prepared? What range of opportunities are there for children? Any environment that represents for them so many hours a day deserves a research program with a broad perspective – not only in terms of ill effects but of the total need for vicarious experience in growing up. We must begin to think about television as though we were thinking about food or air or water."

Approaches to Public Policy

Throughout the long inquiry, researchers and Committee members felt misgivings about the policy implications of their work. They feel them anew now that Senator Pastore has served notice that he will seek testimony on this subject. No one wishes the federal government to become the director of television programming. Few are attracted by the notion that the behavioral scientists should prepare an overall design for the nation's communications system. Pluralism is a matter of faith with most social scientists.

The clearest policy implication of the Surgeon General's Report is that the Congress now has more than adequate justification for periodic review of what the television industry is doing in children's programming and in the larger area of violent content viewed by children. There is no requirement that a law be passed; indeed it would be impossible to formulate a clear and sensible statute on the basis of present evidence. The First Amendment to the Constitution should operate as a strong restraint in this area of lawmaking.

The real question is whether the television industry can be made more sensitive and self-conscious about its great responsibility. Given the evidence available, there is cause

for concern, and good reason for demanding changes. At this stage of our experience with television, warns Dr. Percy Tannenbaum, of the University of California at Berkeley, "to do nothing is to do something."

According to surveys, many of those who produce, program and sponsor television programs – including programs specifically designed for young audiences – are utterly unaware of the social implications of those programs. Those who write programs for the television industry are ignorant of the evidence already available about the effects on children. The communication gap between most television experts and child development specialists is great. The burden should be on the industry to close that gap.

One specific proposal was put forward at the conference in Palo Alto by Lloyd N. Morrisett, President of the Markle Foundation, and Orville G. Brim, President of the Russell Sage Foundation. In Morrisett's words: "We are impressed by the need for techniques to monitor on a continuing basis the amount and quality of violence on television as a means of informing the public and allowing a more complete understanding of the problem. In suggesting an attack on this problem, we fully understand the complexity of the issue. It will be difficult to design sound measures of violence on television and the first ones will undoubtedly be imperfect and need to be improved over time. Despite this and other problems we believe the issue is important enough to warrant immediate action."

The problem demands shared responsibility. Since television for American society is an environmental system, its beneficial use is not an activity to be left exclusively to government, industry, or individual citizens. To realize the potential benefits and avoid the clear hazards television holds for our society, children need the help of parents. The television industry needs the advice of social scientists. And social science needs the support of government.

Perhaps the most succinct conclusion was voiced by Meredith Wilson, Director of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, who served as moderator of the Palo Alto meeting. Figuratively placing himself in the Surgeon General's shoes as a witness before Senator Pastore, he declared: "The Report is couched in cautious language because these are scientists who must be responsible to their discipline. It may appear to say less to you than it does to me. I believe the Report confirms the folk wisdom that there is a causal relation between violence on TV and the behavior of children in an anti-social way. I see this confirmation as being about as clear as a scientific group, given the time allowed them, could have given us. Not only does television incite violence in some who are predisposed to violence, but it is clear to me that violence on TV is a factor in determining this 'predisposition.' Under these circumstances, I am coming to you as a public agent, required to give my advice. In my judgment, violence is clearly dangerous enough to be called to the attention of Congress, the industry, and the public. It merits attention and it requires constructive action."

Conference on Report of Surgeon General's

Committee on Television and Social Behavior

February 18–20, 1972

Palo Alto

Meredith Wilson, Moderator	Director, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences
Albert Bandura	Professor of Psychology, Stanford
Orville G. Brim	President, Russell Sage Foundation
Lloyd Morrisett	President, Markle Foundation
Ithiel de Sola Pool	Professor of Political Science, MIT
Eli Rubinstein	Vice-Chairman, Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee, Television and Social Behavior
Wilbur Schramm	Director, Institute for Communications Research, Stanford
James F. Short	Professor of Sociology, Washington State University. (Director of Violence Commission research)
Alberta Siegel	Professor of Psychology in Psychiatry, Stanford Medical Center
Jesse Steinfeld	U. S. Surgeon General
Harold Stevenson	Professor of Psychology, University of Michigan
Percy Tannenbaum	School of Public Policy, U.C. Berkeley
Ralph Tyler	Acting President, Social Science Research Council
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